Voting for Parties or for Candidates? The Trade-Off Between Party and Personal Representation in Spanish Regional and Local Elections

¿Votando a partidos o a candidatos? El *trade-off* entre representación de partido y personal en las elecciones autonómicas y locales en España

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ABSTRACT

When voters cast their ballot, are they choosing a candidate or a party? Electoral systems have a significant impact on how this question is answered in each country. As previous literature has shown, some electoral rules foster a more personal representation, while others strengthen the intermediary role of parties. In this paper I maintain that there exists a trade-off between these two types of representation. To empirically verify its existence and how it works, I have chosen local and regional elections in Spain as a case study. Given that they take place simultaneously under similar electoral systems, they can be considered a natural experiment for the study of this trade-off, which allows me to overcome the potential problems of endogeneity present in previous studies. By

RESUMEN

Cuando los electores emiten su voto, ¿están eligiendo un candidato o un partido? Los sistemas electorales ejercen un impacto significativo en cómo esta cuestión es resuelta en cada país. Tal y como estudios anteriores han demostrado, algunos de ellos fomentan una representación más personal, mientras que otros contribuyen a reforzar el papel intermediador de los partidos. En este artículo defiendo que existe un *trade-off* entre estos dos tipos de representación. Para contrastar empíricamente su existencia y funcionamiento, selecciono como caso de estudio las elecciones autonómicas y locales en España. Dado que tienen lugar de manera simultánea y bajo sistemas electorales similares, pueden ser consideradas un experimento natural para el estudio de este *trade-off*, lo cual hace posible superar los problemas

measuring the significance of ideological closeness and candidate evaluations in voters' decisions at each level, it is shown that the importance of personal representation increases in local elections at the expense of a less frequent use of ideological proximity as an informational shortcut, thus confirming the existence of the trade-off.

de endogeneidad presentes en estudios anteriores. Mediante una estimación de la significación de la proximidad ideológica y las evaluaciones de los candidatos en las decisiones de voto a cada nivel, se demuestra que la importancia de la representación personal se incrementa en las elecciones locales, a expensas de un uso menos frecuente de la proximidad ideológica como atajo informativo, confirmándose así la existencia del *trade-off*.

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INTRODUCTION[1]

When voters cast their ballot, are they choosing a candidate or a party? A first answer could simply be: both. After every single election, electoral systems are used to apportion seats among the different parties that compete in the election, and to select the individual candidates who will be appointed as representatives. Elections thus act as a mechanism for deciding the policies to be enacted among the options proposed by the different parties, and for establishing the specific representatives who will implement them. In addition, citizens also use their vote to express a judgment about parties' and candidates' performance in office during the previous term. As a consequence of these two processes, elections serve the purpose of improving the quality of both representation and representatives (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 1999).

However, are these two sides of political representation fully compatible? Previous literature on how electoral rules might foster or impede each of them suggests otherwise. On the one hand, it is known that using plurality rule in single-member districts or opening the ballot in multi-member constituencies creates incentives to cultivate a personal vote (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1987; Carey and Shugart, 1994), thus stressing the quality of representatives, at the expense of that of representation. On the other hand, it has been shown that a proportional formula in large districts with closed lists induces parties to replicate the distribution of voters across the different political issues, consequently improving «the quality of policy advocacy» (Cox, 1997: 230), although weakening the links between constituents and representatives.

These two opposing tendencies in the effects of electoral systems suggest the existence of a trade-off between personal and party representation, which should be considered a relevant object of study due to its many implications. First, it is important to note that determining the existence of this trade-off and its consequences could offer a better understanding of how accountability is exercised. A more personal representation allows voters to reward or punish their representatives individually, thus creating a structure of costs and incentives which discourages the appearance of corruption scandals (Kunicová and Rose-Ackerman, 2005), but which may entail the risk of pork-barrel politics (Lancaster, 1986; Chang and Golden, 2006) and political clientelism (Mainwaring, 1991). Furthermore, the relative importance of one or another side of representation may also have an impact on other political dimensions, such as government responsiveness (Blais and Bodet, 2006), party cohesion and discipline (Atmor, Hazan and Rahat, 2009), the potential influence of

pressure groups (Bawn and Thies, 2003) and even turnout (Anduiza, 2002) or attitudes towards democracy (Farrell and McAllister, 2006).

From a scientific point of view, although a great deal of effort has been expended on analyzing how electoral rules shape the type of political representation that predominates in each country (see Colomer, 2009, for a state-of-the-art), the intrinsic problem of endogeneity that underlies every study on the political consequences of electoral systems (Benoit, 2007) calls into question the value of these findings. Is it the electoral system that attributes more importance to the party or the candidate, or is it the desired type of representation that determines the choice of the features of electoral rules in the first place? This question is not trivial: to determine the existence of this trade-off, it is essential to make sure that voters' preferences for either a personal or party representation are not the result of manipulation by political elites or other third variables not previously considered.

My decision to focus on what can be considered a natural experiment for the study of this trade-off – regional and local elections in Spain – might offer new insights into this issue. Since they take place simultaneously in most regions, and under a similar electoral system (proportional representation in large districts, with closed ballot), it will be possible to study the impact of my main independent variable (district magnitude) on how this trade-off is resolved, as I will be able to control for the effect of both contextual and individual variables. The structure of this article is as follows: the next section develops theoretically the definition of this trade-off and reviews how it has been analyzed previously. The following section introduces the analytical framework and the methodology I have used to verify its existence and its political consequences. The fourth section presents the results of the empirical analysis and their implications. Finally, the article ends with a summary of my conclusions and some future paths of research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Previous studies on the political consequences of electoral rules have broadly discussed how they can affect party representation. In this literature, special emphasis has been placed on analyzing how electoral rules affect the size and polarization of the party system (Duverger, 1963; Sartori, 1986; Cox, 1997). Equally intense debate has centered on the impact of electoral institutions on the internal organization of parties, the behavior of parliamentarians and the process of government formation (see Gallagher and Mitchell, 2005, for a summary of this debate) and also, therefore, on the stability of the political system as a whole (Farrell, 2001). Although these studies address very different issues, they all share in common a focus on how parties – and not individual candidates – obtain

representation and translate voters' preferences into specific public policies, and on how electoral systems can improve the quality of representation.

However, the quality of representatives, an element that is usually neglected in this literature, is an equally important objective. In a context of growing complexity of the public agenda, voting procedures should allow voters to choose not only *which* public policies should be devised and implemented, but also *who* should be in charge of these processes (Colomer, 2009). Thus, electoral systems can also play a crucial role in the quality of representatives: by fostering intra-party competition and extending voters' freedom of choice, they can promote a more personal representation, thereby helping to ensure that the most talented and skillful candidates are the ones who get elected.

As previous research has shown, some specific institutional settings foster a more personal relationship between voters and voted, thereby allowing candidates to cultivate a personal vote (Carey and Shugart, 1994), that is, highlighting their personal traits in order to maximize their probabilities of being elected. From the perspective of voters, this represents an opportunity to have closer and more frequent contact with their representatives (Curtice and Shively, 2000), thus enabling them to make better informed political decisions. In contrast, in other institutional configurations it is the parties that play a central intermediary role (Müller, 2000). Public policies are defined as a result of inter-party competition in elections, but the specific candidates to implement them are mostly decided in the intra-party arena. Since officers owe their position not to their voters but to the party they belong to, party discipline is strong and the incentives to cultivate a personal vote disappear.

As stated earlier, a key element for understanding which of these two types of representation predominates lies in the incentives and disincentives provided by the electoral system and, more specifically, its three main features: district magnitude, electoral formula and ballot structure. The extent to which an electoral system allows the expression of a personal vote seems to increase with district magnitude if lists are open (Lancaster, 1986; Carey and Shugart, 1994), because co-partisans have a stronger need to distinguish themselves from the rest of the candidates. This entails an incentive to compete in the intra-party dimension by establishing a unique personal reputation, distinct from that of the party.

When lists are closed and a proportional formula is used, however, intra-party competition disappears and personal representation decreases very rapidly with district magnitude (Shugart, Valdini and Suominen, 2005). In single-member districts, candidates can use their personal attributes to attract votes for the party list, and they are the only beneficiaries. Nevertheless, as district magnitude increases, party reputation tends to be more important than personal traits, and it is rational for candidates to focus their attention on private intra-party competition, in order to improve their position in the party list (Mitchell, 2000).

These two possible effects of electoral systems on how representation is achieved suggest the existence of a trade-off between them. When personal representation is emphasized, the individual traits of the candidates and their personal relationship with their constituents increase their relevance, at the expense of a diminishing importance of political parties as leading actors in the political system. On the contrary, when electoral systems encourage citizens to make their voting choices on the basis of judgments of the political parties as a whole, they tend to pay less attention to the specific politicians elected in the party list, and thus have a very marginal influence on their behavior in office.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

RESEARCH QUESTION

The main objective of this research paper is to address the existence of this trade-off between personal and party representation and to analyze how it is affected by electoral systems. My research question will be thus: to what extent are these two sides of political representation compatible when an electoral system is chosen? Would improving the quality of representatives be detrimental to the quality of representation, in ideological or partisan terms? Or, on the contrary, can an election be simultaneously candidate-centered and party-centered?

To try to answer this question, previous studies have analyzed the consequences of different electoral systems from a comparative perspective, either only theoretically (Carey and Shugart, 1994) or with datasets for several countries comprising variables related to the electoral process and the type of representation (see Colomer, 2009, for a state-of-the-art). All of this work, however, needs to be framed in the debate on how electoral systems are endogenously defined (Benoit, 2007).

In this case, it could be argued that the incentives provided by the electoral system to politicians and voters on how to perceive the election – more candidate-centered or more party-centered – are not completely independent from the demands of their own political elites and citizens, who have some influence on the change and stability of the features of the electoral system. In other words, my concern lies in the fact that it is not clear whether the electoral system affects the type of representation, or vice versa, since the previous importance of the ties between voters and candidates or parties may have determined the choice of electoral rules in the first place. In conclusion, the predominance of one type of representation or the other and their incompatibility may therefore simply be the result of a political choice and not of an actual trade-off.

Although proving the existence of these endogeneity issues in the previous literature is complex, I believe that there are good reasons to question the value of its findings in the light of this argument. Furthermore, it is necessary to control for the effect of other institutional and contextual variables that might affect both electoral system choice and how the trade-off is resolved in each country or election. Such variables include the type of political system and how its main institutions are configured (Poguntke and Webb, 2005), the type of candidate selection processes in the intra-party dimension (Norris, 2004; Atmor, Hazan and Rahat, 2009), the characteristics of the competitions in the inter-party dimension (Samuels, 1999), or even individual sociodemographic characteristics. Neglecting the possible influence of these variables on the solution of the trade-off, as is usually the case in the abovementioned studies, might lead us to wrongly identify a spurious effect of the electoral system on the type of representation as a causal relationship.

CASE SELECTION

To overcome these problems, and in order to understand and empirically verify the existence of a trade-off, it is therefore necessary to find two or more elections where the importance of candidates and parties seems to differ, but not as a result of the characteristics of the electoral system. Only if the electoral system is constant or exogenously defined will it be possible to understand the extent to which voters and candidates face a real trade-off between focusing the election either on parties or on the candidates.

I believe that regional and local elections in Spain, which will be my case study in this article, can be considered a natural experiment for the study of the trade-off, since they meet all of these methodological requirements. Firstly, because the electoral rules at both levels are equivalent; in both cases, closed party lists compete in large districts, where a proportional formula is used to convert votes into seats. Secondly, because both types of elections are held simultaneously, with the exception of what are known as the «historic» nationalities or regions (Catalonia, Basque Country, Galicia and Andalusia), where the respective autonomous parliaments have the right to call elections at any time. And finally, because the combination of these two factors has favored the creation and development of very similar party systems at both levels of government.

As a consequence of these three elements (similar electoral systems, simultaneity of elections and similitude of party systems), it is clear that my case can be considered a natural experiment for this purpose. By controlling the effect of electoral rules and other

external factors, and of the attitudinal and sociodemographic characteristics of voters at individual level, it will be possible to overcome the abovementioned endogeneity and specification problems.

An additional methodological reason justifies the selection of this case study. Previous research on vertical split-ticket voting (Gschwend, 2007) in simultaneous elections in Spain (Montero, 1988; Sanz, 2008) has shown the existence of a substantive proportion of multilevel differential voters, that is, citizens whose electoral behavior differs at each territorial level. Although the results obtained so far are inconclusive (Pallarés, Lago and Galais, 2008), previous studies for this case (Sanz, 2007) point towards the «accidental hypothesis» (Jacobson, 1990) for the explanation of these systematic variations in vote choice. In other words, split-ticket voting seems to be the result of a heterogeneous offer of candidates, of a different use of ideology or party identification as an informational shortcut, and of the different array of interests that voters have at each level.

Since I am interested in studying how the type of political representation varies at each level, the existence of such a high level of split-ticket voting is precisely the variation that I am looking for in my dependent variable. And these reasons that seem to motivate this differential behavior support my theoretical expectations: the three elements mentioned earlier suggest the different importance of personal and party representation at each level.

HYPOTHESES

In which direction does this trade-off manifest itself in the Spanish case, and why? My main hypothesis is that, as a result of a lower district magnitude in local elections than in regional elections, the type of representation is more personal in the former than in the latter. And since I maintain the existence of a trade-off between the two types of representation, I therefore expect local elections to be less party-centered, as a consequence of the greater importance of individual candidates in the political process.

Two complementary causal mechanisms, linked to the idea of the proximity between public institutions and citizens, support this hypothesis. From the demand side, in local elections, where the constituency tends to be smaller, citizens feel closer to their public representatives, not only objectively but also subjectively. Most of them have had personal contact with their representatives, and in the smallest municipalities they even have some acquaintances in common. This significantly reduces the cost of acquiring political information, and vote choice is based more on local issues and the candidate's personal traits than on his political affiliation. From the supply side, politicians are aware of the

importance of their personal characteristics and base their political campaign on their ability to defend the interests of the constituency.

In regional elections, however, where district magnitude is usually higher, the opposite argument applies. Most voters do not have direct contact with their representatives and therefore lack detailed knowledge of candidates and campaign issues. When deciding whom to vote for, therefore, they must draw upon other sources of information. Among these, partisan or ideological cognitive shortcuts (Lau and Redlawsk, 2006) play a major role: voters rely on their party label to judge every candidate, and decide their vote by taking into account not their personal characteristics, but how well they fit their heuristic expectations. Candidates and parties, from the supply side, perceive this situation as an incentive not to develop their own personal attributes, but to improve their reputation within the party, as a way to benefit from the use of ideological and partisan shortcuts.

Two empirically testable hypotheses about the behavior of both voters and parties can be derived from these theoretical assumptions. On the one hand, should my theory be correct, I would expect voters to pay more attention to candidates' personal traits in local elections than in regional elections, and on the other, citizens should tend to give more weight to partisan or ideological identification when deciding whom to vote for in the latter compared to the former.

However, if these affirmations are correct, the strength of the trade-off should also vary between constituencies of different size. In large cities, where district magnitude is similar for both types of elections and citizens tend to feel equally attached to both, the trade-off may be less intense, and party representation should predominate in both regional and local elections. In smaller towns, however, as district magnitude decreases, so does the proximity between local institutions and citizens, while that of regional government remains constant. As a result, I should expect a far more personal representation in local elections in these districts, and thus a stronger trade-off.

Additionally, how this trade-off is resolved should also be different not only between municipalities, but also between individuals. The intensity of direct contact with representatives or the use of informational shortcuts, which I used as causal mechanisms to explain the different importance of party and personal representation, should not be the result of exclusively institutional or contextual variables (in this case, the magnitude of the constituency). Attitudinal and sociodemographic characteristics of voters also affect the extent to which they have access to political information or the political elites. All else being equal, I expect to find a greater importance of personal representation for those individuals with a higher level of education, a greater political experience and a lower ideological polarization.

DATA AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF VARIABLES

In order to verify all of these hypotheses, I will use post-electoral survey data from the Spanish «Center for Sociological Research» (CIS), corresponding to the most recent regional and local elections (2007). Unfortunately, the few CIS surveys that included questions about candidate evaluations and ideological closeness for the two levels were precisely those used for the capital cities of the regions where elections were not held simultaneously. As a result, I cannot take full advantage of the study for this natural experiment, but this difficulty will be overcome by proposing two different yet complementary research designs, which I expect to yield similar results.

In the first design, I will focus on the cases of Barcelona (surveys 2660 and 2720) and Santiago de Compostela[2] (surveys 2611 and 2722). Although the temporal lapse between regional and local elections in these municipalities was significant (six months in Barcelona and less than two years in Santiago), I can assume that most of the contextual factors remained constant. The interest in these specific cases lies in the availability of questions about ideological identification or party closeness and candidate evaluation for all major parties at both territorial levels. This is particularly relevant, since I cannot presume that voters place parties in the same position on the ideological scale at every level.

A second approach to my hypotheses will be based not on the comparison between regional and local elections in the same municipalities, but on the analysis of local elections between different cities (in this case, between Barcelona, Seville and Santiago de Compostela; surveys 2720, 2723 and 2722, respectively). As a departure from my previous research design, from this second perspective I study elections that take place simultaneously, thus enabling me to control for external factors that affect all of them[3], but not for the differences in their party system, their candidates or their sociodemographic composition. Furthermore, this comparison will be particularly interesting for the study of this trade-off because of the difference in size of these three municipalities: while Barcelona is a large metropolis (with more than 1.5 million inhabitants), Seville is a capital with a standard population size (approximately 700,000), and Santiago is a small city (its population is less than 100,000).

In both cases, however, my models and the operationalization of the variables they contain will be similar. In order to test for the existence of the trade-off, I will estimate a

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[2] Data were also available for Seville and Vitoria, but their very limited sample sizes (for regional post-electoral surveys), the different formulation of certain questions and the considerable temporal difference between elections at each level (more than 3 years in the case of Seville), dissuaded me from using them in my study.

[3] Such as the political situation in the national arena, which has been proved to affect the outcome in second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

logistic regression for the explanation of voting choice at the individual level[4]. The importance of party representation will be measured as the size and significance of the coefficient measuring the effect of ideological closeness at each level. The relevance of personal representation, on the other hand, will be measured by the coefficient referring to candidate evaluations.

In greater detail, my dependent variable will be a dichotomous indicator of the vote for the largest incumbent party in each municipality (value 1) or for the main opposition party (value 0)[5]. Abstainers and other parties' voters are excluded from the samples in order to avoid a potential selection bias, due to the presence of a substantive proportion of missing cases in the questions about candidate evaluation[6].

My two main independent variables will be, on the one hand, the relative perceived ideological proximity to the incumbent and the opposition party[7]; and, on the other, the relative evaluation of each of the two candidates. Descriptive statistics for each of these variables are presented in the appendix (Tables VI and VII).

To give more detail, the first variable will be operationalized as the difference between the ideological proximity to each of the two parties. In other words, I will begin by estimating the absolute differences between the self-reported position of the voter on the ideological scale (from 1, extreme left, to 10, extreme right) and the position of the two parties, also reported by the respondent. Then I will calculate the difference between these two values, and the resulting variable will be recodified in such a way that it will range from –9 (minimum ideological closeness to incumbent party; maximum ideological closeness to main

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[4] Since sample size is different for surveys in regional and local elections (lower in regional elections, because we select only the individuals living in the capital cities), the regressions will be estimated by weighting each of the two subsamples appropriately, in order to avoid potential biases.

[5] The only exception to this rule will be made in the case of the regional elections of Galicia. For reasons of coherence, in order to have the same party with value 1 at both levels, I use this value to codify the respondents who voted for PP at each of the elections.

[6] Limiting my analysis to voters of the two main parties may have other potential unwanted consequences in terms of the validity and reliability of my results. It could be argued that my coefficients might be biased, since smaller parties may rely more on the personal traits of their candidates in order to maximize their vote share, while abstainers may not vote precisely because the intensity of their ideological preferences is lower. However, this is a necessary step, given the data available, and I do not think that it diminishes the value of my findings, since my main concern is testing for the existence of this trade-off, not assessing its importance and impact on voting decisions.

[7] It could be argued that choosing party closeness (and not ideological proximity) to measure party representation might be a better decision from a theoretical standpoint. There is an intense debate in the literature about which of the two is used as an informational shortcut most often in Spain and Europe or about which is a better predictor of voting choice (Torcal and Medina, 2002; Inglehart and Klingeman, 1976). Since I do not want to enter into this discussion, I also estimated my regressions when using party closeness as an independent variable. The results – available upon request to the author – are very similar.

opposition party) to +9 (maximum ideological closeness to incumbent party; minimum ideological closeness to main opposition party)[8].

In a similar fashion, the second variable – candidate evaluations – will be introduced in the models as the difference between the evaluation of the incumbent candidate and that of the main opposition candidate, both measured on 11-point scales, from 0 (worst evaluation) to 10 (best evaluation). As a result, I obtain a score that will range from –10 (for those voters who assign a value of 0 to the incumbent candidate and 10 to the main opposition candidate) to +10 (when they give a 10 to the incumbent candidate and a 0 to the main opposition candidate).

Additionally, dummy variables for the different levels of election or the different municipalities under consideration will also be introduced, in order to control for other variables that affect each election differently (the different offer of parties and candidates, or other variables that might have an impact on voting choice).

The interpretation of the first two variables will be relevant in order to ensure that both have a significant explanatory power as regards voting choice. But my main concern is testing whether their importance – in empirical terms, their slope – is different at each level. For this purpose, I will introduce an interaction term between the two of them and the dummy variables referring to each level of election. If its coefficient is positive after estimating the models, this will mean that the slope of the regression line for voting choice on ideological closeness or candidate evaluation (whichever applies in each case) will be steeper for the case selected with the dummy variable than in the reference case (with value 0 in the dummy variable).

Turning back to my hypotheses, I should expect candidate evaluations to be a better predictor of voting choice in local elections than in regional elections, and thus the interaction terms should have positive coefficients. At the same time, to show the existence of the trade-off, I should expect ideological closeness to have less explanatory power as regards my dependent variable in local elections, and therefore a negative sign in the regression coefficient. By introducing these two interactions simultaneously in my regression models, I will try to test whether the trade-off actually exists: if both turn out to be significant, then my expectation will be confirmed.

When comparing municipalities as opposed to levels of election, when the trade-off is more intense – that is, in smaller municipalities (Seville and Santiago) – I should find that

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[8] Regressions were also calculated for this variable in quadratic scale, but they yielded very similar results in terms of significance and fit of the models. In order to facilitate the interpretation of the coefficients, I eventually decided to use this operationalization.

candidate evaluations matter more and ideological closeness is a worse predictor of the vote, which would be proved if the coefficients of the interaction terms were positive for the first variable and negative for the second one.

In order to ensure that these relationships are neither spurious nor the result of omitted variables, I will include in my models some of the most commonly used independent variables in the literature on electoral behavior (Campbell et al., 1960; Thomassen, 2005; van der Eijk and Franklin, 2009; Anduiza and Bosch, 2004): gender (as a dichotomous variable, with value 1 for female), age, level of studies (as a categorical variable, with three values: no studies or primary studies, secondary studies, university studies) and religiosity (combining religious orientation and church attendance, and ranging from 1 for those unreligious individuals who never go to church to 6 for those religious respondents who go to church several times a week)[9]. Social class or income could not be included, since they were not available in some of the surveys.

As stated previously, I am interested not only in the mechanisms for this trade-off at the aggregate level, but also in how it manifests itself at the individual level. To find out, I will take advantage of some of the questions included in the pre-electoral surveys for the same three municipalities (Barcelona, Seville and Santiago; surveys 2683, 2686 and 2685). My dependent variable will be the answer to the question «when voting in these local elections, what do you attribute more importance to?», with value 1 for the category «the candidate» and value 0 for the category «the political party». It is important to note, however, that the use of this question entails certain risks. It could be argued that voters are not really able to measure the weight of each of these two elements on their voting decision, but for the sake of this paper I will assume that are, since an initial perusal of the results of this question supports my theoretical expectations: the candidate is more important in Santiago (52.6%) than in Seville (39.7%) or Barcelona (35.6%). And these differences are consistent when I analyze the results for this same question in previous elections (see Table I).

In order to understand how citizens perceive the trade-off, I will introduce age, level of studies and ideological polarization (a dichotomous indicator, with value 1 for individuals who place themselves in positions 1 to 3 and 8 to 10 on the ideological scale; and value 0 for the rest) as independent variables, as well as a dummy variable for each municipality (Seville being the reference category). My expectation is that the candidate should be more

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[9] It may be argued that interaction terms between these control variables and the different levels of elections should be introduced, since the effect of education on voting behavior might not be equivalent in Barcelona and Seville, for example. However, their inclusion would increase the complexity and multicollinearity of my models, while at the same time not being completely justified from a theoretical perspective, given that the dependent variables in all my models are codified in such a way that value 1 stands for a socialist party and value 0 stands for a conservative party.

TABLE I

Self-reported importance of candidate and parties in voting choice (percentages)

	When voting in these local elections, what do you attribute more importance to...?			
	1999	2003	2007	Average
Barcelona				
The party	51.2	50.6	52.1	**51.3**
The candidate	38.3	38.5	35.6	**37.5**
Seville				
The party	45.1	46.1	45.8	**45.7**
The candidate	39.5	40.1	39.7	**39.8**
Santiago de Compostela				
The party	42.3	40.3	34.5	**39.0**
The candidate	52.6	54.6	52.6	**53.3**

SOURCES:
CIS pre-electoral surveys 2340, 2344, 2348, 2499, 2503, 2507, 2683, 2685 and 2686. Percentages do not add up to 100, due to rounding and respondents who did not answer.

important for older people with higher levels of education and a lower level of intensity in their ideological preferences (because they have lower information costs and thus make less use of ideological proximity as a shortcut), and in Santiago with respect to Seville and Barcelona (due to the difference in constituency size, which affects the importance of the candidate's personal traits).

RESULTS

Table II presents the results of my three initial logistic regressions, which refer to regional and local elections in the city of Barcelona. First, I estimate an additive model, where I find that voters' relative ideological closeness to the socialist party and not to the conservative party, as well as the relative evaluation of the candidates at each level (José Montilla and Artur Mas in the regional elections; Jordi Hereu and Xavier Trias in the local elections) are very powerful explanations of the vote for the main incumbent party (PSC) and not for the main opposition party (CiU). All else being equal, the greater the relative ideological closeness and the better the relative evaluation of the candidates, the more likely it is that a vote will be made for this party. By introducing a dummy variable for the local elections, I find that differences in these variables and in the controls account for the existence of any split-ticket voters, and that therefore, after controlling for them, the probability of voting for PSC and not CiU is similar at each level.

Logistic regression. Local and regional elections in Barcelona.
Dependent variable: vote for PSC=1; vote for CiU=0

|	Model 1.1	Model 1.2	Model 1.3	Model 1.4
Candidate evaluations	1.23***	1.18***	1.23***	1.18***
	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.22)	(0.24)
Ideological closeness	0.81***	0.81***	0.81***	0.81***
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.25)	(0.24)
Local elections	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02
	(0.45)	(0.47)	(0.61)	(0.62)
Gender (female)	−0.23	−0.24	−0.23	−0.24
	(0.38)	(0.39)	(0.38)	(0.40)
Age	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Level of studies	−0.37	−0.37	−0.37	−0.37
	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.26)	(0.26)
Religiosity	−0.45**	−0.46**	−0.45**	−0.46**
	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.21)
Evaluations * local		0.07		0.07
		(0.43)		(0.43)
Closeness * local			0.00	0.00
			(0.30)	(0.30)
Constant	0.63	0.64	0.63	0.64
	(1.28)	(1.27)	(1.31)	(1.29)
N	450	450	450	450
Pseudo R2	0.732	0.733	0.732	0.733
Wald chi2	82.72	95.96	83.07	98.96

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

My main interest, however, concerns the result of the second, third, and fourth models. It is here where I introduce the interaction terms between ideological closeness and candidate evaluations, and the different levels of election. As can be seen, none of them proves to be significant and, in the case of ideological closeness, it does not have the expected sign. This implies that these two factors in voting choice have the same explanatory power at the same level. In order to facilitate interpretation of these coefficients, in Figures 1 and 2 I simulate the effect of each of the two variables on voting choice in regional and local elections, holding the rest of the variables constant in their means.

As we can see, the slopes and intercepts of the curves explaining how the probability of voting for the incumbent (and not for the opposition party), which varies according to the different levels of relative ideological closeness and candidate evaluations, are identical. In

FIGURE 1

Predicted probability of voting for incumbent in Barcelona (Model 1.4)
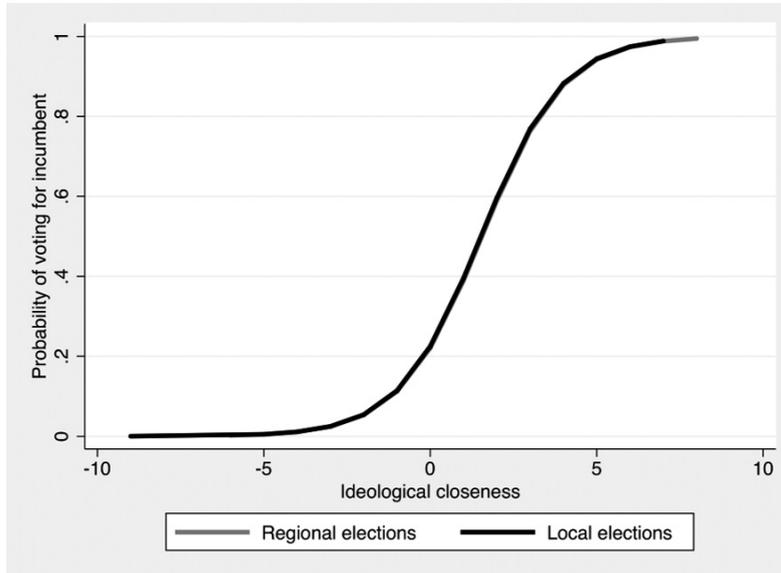

other words, the increase in the probability of voting for PSC for an increase of one unit in either the relative ideological closeness or the candidate evaluations is equivalent at both levels. Does this mean that the trade-off does not exist? Not necessarily. Since Barcelona is a very large constituency at both levels, the level of proximity of public institutions to citizens is also very similar. Consequently, the strength of the trade-off is similar in both elections, and this could be a possible explanation for the absence of a significant interaction term.

If this interpretation is correct, I would expect the trade-off to be more intense in smaller municipalities, such as Santiago de Compostela. The results presented in Table III confirm my intuition. In this case, as was explained in the previous section, I estimate the probability of voting for the incumbent party at the local level (PSOE) and not for the main opposition party (PP), which seems to be significantly correlated with the relative ideological closeness to this party and the evaluation of its candidates (Emilio P. Touriño and Manuel Fraga in the regional elections; Xosé A. Sánchez and Gerardo Conde in the local elections). Unlike the previous case, after controlling for the rest of the variables, the probability of voting for the socialist party is significantly different: it is higher in the regional elections than in the local elections.

Predicted probability of voting for incumbent in Barcelona (Model 1.4)
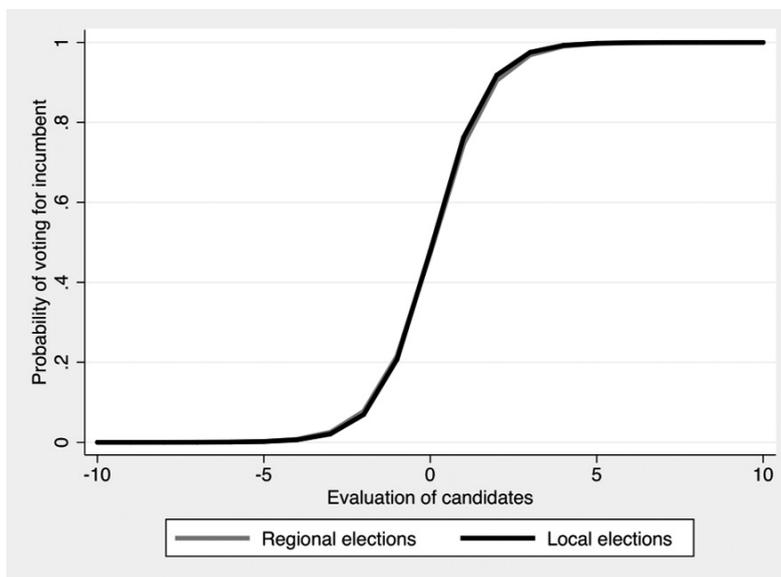
It is when I introduce the interaction terms, in models 2.2 to 2.4, that we can perceive the effect of the trade-off. On the one hand, relative ideological closeness is a better predictor of voting choice at regional level than at local level, as the negative coefficient of the interaction term indicates. On the other hand, although the coefficient of the interaction term for candidate evaluations loses significance in the fourth model, it is still positive and very close to being significant. This means that candidate evaluations explain a much greater part of the variance in the dependent variable at local level.

However, if we focus on the coefficients of the main effects of the interaction, we can see how they are still significant and have the expected sign. This means that, as stated in my hypotheses, both ideological closeness and candidate evaluations are powerful explanations of voting choice, but their importance is different at each level in Santiago. In regional elections, feeling closer to the PSOE and not to the PP is more relevant than in local elections when explaining why a citizen votes for one party and not for the other. On the contrary, in local elections it is candidate evaluations that can make a difference to the probability of a voter supporting the PSOE and not the PP. This can be perceived more easily if, once again, I plot the predicted probabilities of my dependent variable when I allow ideological closeness and candidate evaluation to vary.

TABLE III

Logistic regression. Local and regional elections in Santiago de Compostela.
Dependent variable: vote for PSOE=1; vote for PP=0

|	Model 2.1	Model 2.2	Model 2.3	Model 2.4
Candidate evaluations	0.95***	0.72***	1.08***	0.85***
	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.19)
Ideological closeness	0.86***	0.85***	1.54***	1.34***
	(0.27)	(0.29)	(0.43)	(0.34)
Local elections	−2.14***	−2.28**	−2.85***	−2.69***
	(0.81)	(0.91)	(0.83)	(0.89)
Gender (female)	0.73	0.84	1.06	1.09
	(0.60)	(0.66)	(0.71)	(0.73)
Age	−0.05**	−0.05**	−0.05**	−0.05**
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Level of studies	−1.06**	−0.97**	−1.36**	−1.21***
	(0.53)	(0.48)	(0.53)	(0.46)
Religiosity	−0.00	0.01	-0.02	−0.02
	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.22)
Evaluations * local		0.68*		0.52
		(0.38)		(0.36)
Closeness * local			−0.86**	−0.71*
			(0.44)	(0.42)
Constant	5.80***	5.69***	7.15***	6.58***
	(1.83)	(1.96)	(1.94)	(1.81)
N	306	306	306	306
Pseudo R2	0.772	0.782	0.786	0.791
Wald chi2	33.37	29.44	51.54	47.40

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

As can be deduced from the first graph, the slope of the regression line of voting for PSOE on ideological closeness is much steeper at the regional level, and, except for very low levels of this variable, the probability of voting for this party is always higher at the upper level. The second graph provides additional evidence that supports the verification of my hypothesis. For a voter with an average relative ideological closeness, the probability of voting for PSOE and not for PP increases substantively as the difference in the evaluations of their candidates at the local level increases. At the regional level, however, the slope is still significant but flatter: a greater difference in the evaluations of the candidates improves the probability of voting for PSOE.

These results, for the case of Santiago, prove the existence of the trade-off between personal and party representation, which is the main concern of this article, since they

Predicted probability of voting for incumbent in Santiago de Compostela (Model 2.4)
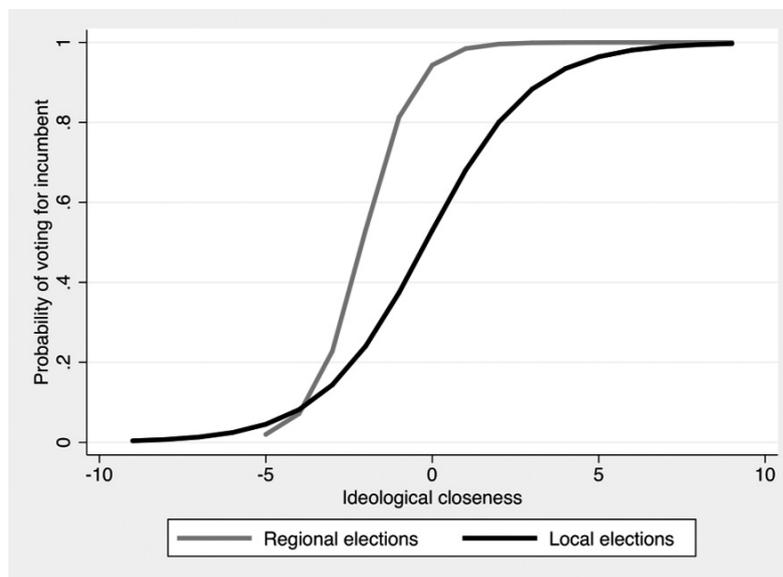

show that when candidate evaluations are a better predictor of voting choice, ideological closeness loses importance for explaining the same variable.

I provide further evidence that supports my hypotheses in table IV, in which I report the results of the empirical analysis applying my second alternative research design. In this case, I am not comparing the probability of voting for the main incumbent party between levels of election in the same city, but for the same level in different municipalities (Barcelona, Seville and Santiago). The interpretation of the coefficients for ideological closeness and candidate evaluations is similar to that of the previous models. As for the dummy variables, the positive and significant results for Seville and Santiago (only in models 3.3 and 3.4) imply that voting for the main incumbent party is more likely in these municipalities than in Barcelona.

In line with my previous results for the case of Santiago, all the coefficients of the interaction terms are significant and most have the expected sign. On the one hand, the explanatory power of ideological closeness to the main opposition party is higher in Barcelona (a large city) than in Seville and Santiago (smaller municipalities). On the other hand, the importance of candidate evaluation increases as constituency size decreases: in Santiago it

FIGURE 4

Predicted probability of voting for incumbent in Santiago de Compostela (Model 2.4)
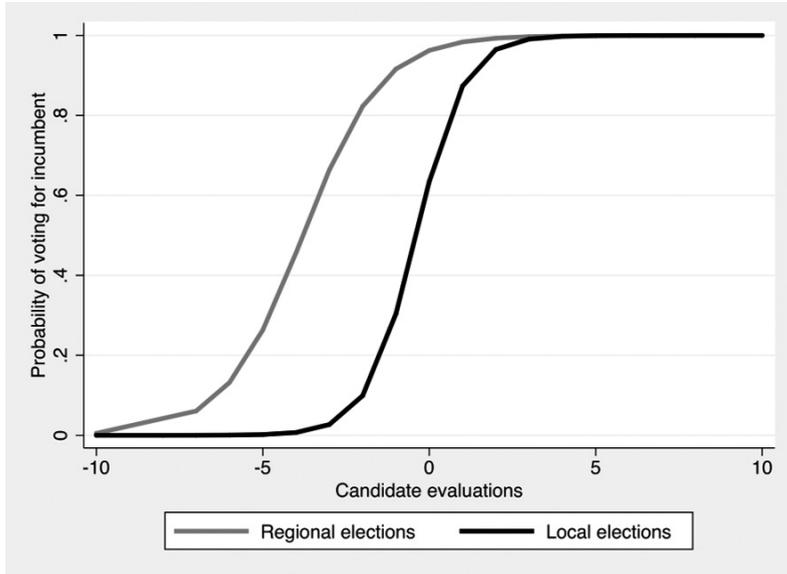
is a better predictor of voting choice than in Barcelona. The only exception is the candidate evaluations in Seville: the coefficient of the interaction term is not as expected[10].

This can also be observed in Figures 5 and 6, in which I estimate the predicted probabilities of voting for the incumbent (and not for the opposition) parties for each municipality, holding all the variables constant in their means, except relative ideological closeness in the first figure, and candidate evaluations in the second one. As we can see, the slope of the regression line is slightly flatter in Santiago than in Barcelona or Seville, which implies that the distance, in ideological terms, between the voter and the parties is less important in this municipality. At the same time, as represented in the second figure, the importance of candidate evaluation behaves in exactly the opposite way. When the evaluation is lower, citizens from Barcelona are almost equally as likely to vote for this party as in Santiago. When it increases, however, the slope being steeper in the latter case, the situation changes: all else being equal, a greater difference between the candidate

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[10] A possible justification for this finding is the fact that candidate evaluations for both the incumbent and opposition candidates were much lower in this municipality than in either of the other two. In this context, citizens may draw upon other informational shortcuts (ideological closeness, social class, electoral campaign issues...) when deciding their vote, and this would explain why the slope for Seville in figure 6 is flatter.

TABLE IV

Logistic regression. Local elections in Barcelona, Seville and Santiago de Compostela.
Dependent variable: vote for incumbent=1; vote for main opposition party=0

	Model 3.1	Model 3.2	Model 3.3	Model 3.4
Candidate evaluations	1.00***	1.15***	1.02***	1.18***
	(0.19)	(0.02)	(0.19)	(0.01)
Ideological closeness	0.64***	0.67***	0.87***	0.90***
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.04)	(0.01)
Seville	0.98***	0.73***	1.26***	0.99***
	(0.19)	(0.11)	(0.19)	(0.10)
Santiago	0.09	−0.02	0.36***	0.32***
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Gender (female)	−0.08	−0.03	−0.07	−0.01
	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.20)
Age	−0.02***	−0.02***	−0.02***	−0.02***
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Level of studies	−0.57***	−0.62***	−0.59**	−0.62**
	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.24)	(0.26)
Religiosity	−0.23***	−0.27***	−0.22***	−0.27***
	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.09)
Evaluations * Seville		−0.53***		−0.54***
		(0.07)		(0.03)
Evaluations * Santiago		0.13***		0.09***
		(0.03)		(0.01)
Closeness * Seville			−0.37***	−0.30***
			(0.05)	(0.01)
Closeness * Santiago			−0.35***	−0.40***
			(0.08)	(0.04)
Constant	2.21***	2.37***	2.22***	2.30***
	(0.15)	(0.23)	(0.36)	(0.39)
N	708	708	708	708
Pseudo R2	0.732	0.740	0.736	0.743
Wald chi2	58.79	73.00	82.55	86.82

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Robust standard errors, adjusted for 3 clusters, in parentheses. Reference category for comparisons between municipalities: Barcelona.

evaluations means a higher probability of voting for the socialist party in Santiago than in Barcelona.

One of the causal mechanisms used to justify my hypotheses was related to a different use of informational shortcuts between municipalities, but as stated earlier, I also expect it to be different between individuals. Table V shows some evidence that confirms these expectations.

TABLE V

Logistic regression. Self-reported importance of candidates for voting decision in local elections in Barcelona, Seville and Santiago de Compostela

	Model 4
Ideological polariz.	−0.71***
	(0.12)
Age	0.01**
	(0.01)
Level of studies	0.18***
	(0.06)
Seville	0.25***
	(0.02)
Santiago	0.80***
	(0.02)
Constant	−1.11***
	(0.32)
N	2421
Pseudo R2	0.050
Wald chi2	151.28

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$. Robust standard errors, adjusted for 3 clusters, in parentheses. Reference category for comparisons between municipalities: Barcelona.

Dependent variable: «When voting in these local elections, what do you attribute more importance to? Political party (value 0) or candidate (value 1)».

Although the fit of the model is not particularly good, it still allows me to show that individuals with a lower level of political polarization, a more advanced age and a higher level of education are those who attribute more importance to the candidate in their voting decisions. The coefficients for the dummy variables, referring to the different municipalities, show equivalent results to those presented in Table IV and Figures 5 and 6: citizens tend to base their voting decision on candidate evaluations more in smaller municipalities than in large cities.
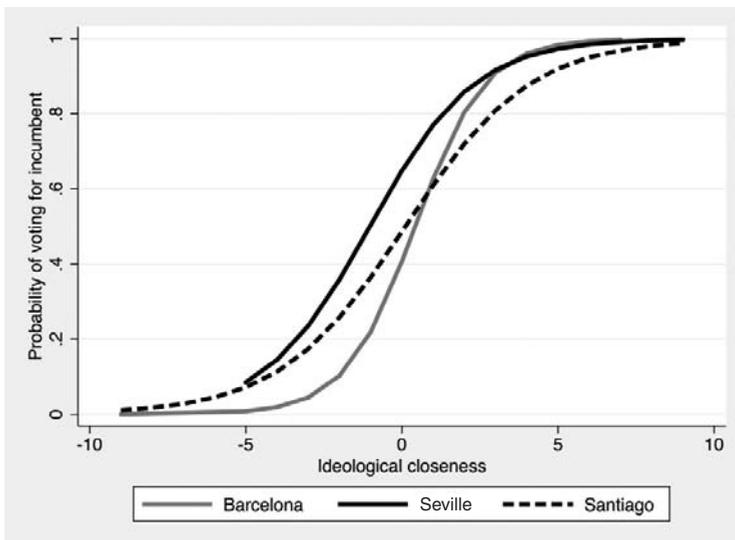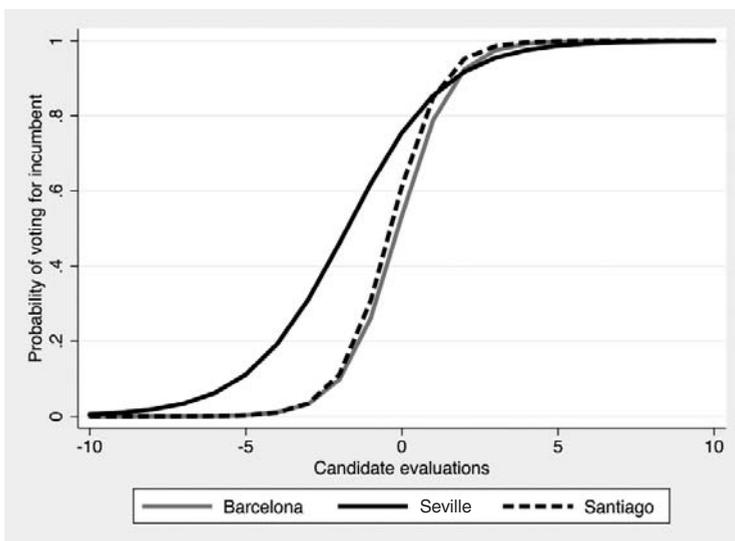
Predicted probability of voting for incumbent party (Model 3.4)

Predicted probability of voting for incumbent party (Model 3.4)

CONCLUSIONS

This article started with a question: when voters cast their ballot, are they choosing a candidate or a party? From a normative perspective, I argued that both were true: in most countries, elections serve the purpose of selecting both the public policies that will be implemented (from among the different proposals of each party) and the specific individuals who will be in charge of this process.

But what about voters? Do they care about these two types of representation? My first conclusion is that they do: both ideological proximity and candidate evaluations are powerful explanations of voting decisions. In other words, when citizens decide whom to vote for, they weigh up not only the candidates' individual skills or public image, but also the party list in which they are running for election. In other words, they care about both the quality of representatives and of representation.

Immediately after this idea was put forward, a second question was posed: is there a trade-off between these two types of representation? From the voters' perspective, when they try to maximize the quality of representatives by choosing the most talented, irrespective of their party label, does the quality of representation suffer as a result? And, on the other hand, when citizens only care about increasing the coherence between their ideological preferences and the outcome of the election, do the individual links between representatives and voters weaken?

Since electoral systems are a crucial factor in explaining the extent to which voters can exercise a personal vote, previous studies have relied on a comparative perspective when addressing these kinds of questions, neglecting the potential endogeneity problems that might affect their results. In this research paper, however, I have overcome this problem by selecting what can be considered a natural experiment for this purpose: regional and local elections in Spain.

By trying to ascertain which factors better explain voting decisions, I have shown that candidate evaluations are a better predictor in local elections than in regional elections, especially in smaller municipalities. Ideological closeness, on the other hand, explains variations in vote choice more significantly at regional level than at local level. As a result, we can conclude that the trade-off between personal and party representation exists, and that it is stronger when district magnitude at the lower level decreases.

In other words, when citizens feel closer to their representatives and when candidates have an incentive to cultivate a personal vote, voters tend to pay more attention to the personal

traits of their representatives when making their political decisions, and are more prone to vote for a party with an ideologically distant position. As district magnitude increases, so does the cost of obtaining information about every single candidate in the election. In this context, evaluations thus lose relevance, and voters tend to draw upon informational shortcuts to decide their vote and maximize its utility.

This second side of the trade-off has been verified by studying which citizens tend to attribute more importance to candidates when choosing whom to vote for. As expected, level of education, age and ideological polarization play a major role in determining how often voters use these shortcuts. Consequently, we can conclude that the intensity of the trade-off varies not only between municipalities, but also among individuals.

It is important to acknowledge that the lack of quality data for most of the regions in which simultaneous elections were held has significantly limited the breadth and depth of this study. Future research on this issue should try to solve this problem, perhaps by focusing not only on the demand side, but also on the offer side. In this article I have shown the existence of the trade-off by focusing on how voters behave. But its effect should also be observable in the behavior of political elites, both parties and candidates. For example, we should expect parties to put forward their best-known candidates at the local level, where candidates should try to exploit their personal traits to their own advantage. At the regional level, and especially in larger municipalities, the opposite should be expected: candidates with a good party reputation, who present themselves to their voters by defending their ideological consistency.

In spite of these limitations, I believe that I have successfully shown that although voters care about both personal and party representation, it is also true that increasing the importance of one detracts from the relevance of the other. When making their decisions, voters thus have to choose between giving their vote to the most talented or charismatic candidate, or being consistent with their ideological preferences and voting for the party closest to their own views. This decision is not irrelevant, since it can have a substantive impact on the quality of representatives and representation and, ultimately, on the performance of the political system itself.

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APPENDIX

TABLE VI

Regional elections. Descriptive statistics

	Barcelona	Santiago
Date of elections	Nov. 2006	June 2005
Population (2007)	1,595,110	93,712
District Magnitude (province)	85	24
Main Incumbent party	PSC	PP
% vote share in municipality	24.3	44.8
Name of candidate	José Montilla	Manuel Fraga
Average ideological closeness (0-9)	7.86	5.36
Average party closeness (1-5)	3.60	2.23
Average candidate evaluation (0-10)	5.10	4.64
Main opposition party	CiU	PSdeG-PSOE
% vote share in municipality	29.5	29.7
Name of candidate	Artur Mas	Emilio P. Touriño
Average ideological closeness (0-9)	6.92	7.46
Average party closeness (1-5)	3.20	2.97
Average candidate evaluation (0-10)	6.15	4.93

SOURCES:

Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Departament de Governació i Administracions Públiques, Consellería de Presidencia, Administracións Publicas e Xustiza, CIS post-electoral surveys 2611 and 2660.

Local elections. Descriptive statistics

	Barcelona	Seville	Santiago
Date of elections	May 2007	May 2007	May 2007
Population (2007)	1,595,110	699,145	93,712
District Magnitude (municipality)	41	33	25
Main Incumbent party	PSC	PSOE	PSdeG-PSOE
% vote share in municipality	29.9	40.5	38.2
Name of candidate	Jordi Hereu	Alfredo S. Monteseirín	Xosé A. Sánchez
Average ideological closeness (0-9)	7.86	7.77	7.53
Average party closeness (1-5)	3.37	3.39	3.14
Average candidate evaluation (0-10)	5.70	5.21	5.79
Main opposition party	CiU	PP	PP
% vote share in municipality	25.5	41.8	39.0
Name of candidate	Xavier Trias	J. Ignacio Zoido	Gerardo Conde
Average ideological closeness (0-9)	6.92	6.11	6.61
Average party closeness (1-5)	3.21	2.50	2.72
Average candidate evaluation (0-10)	5.73	4.87	5.45